

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

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FM AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4491

INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMCONSUL CAPETOWN

AMCONSUL DURBAN

UNCLAS JOHANNESBURG 0304

CAPE TOWN ALSO FOR EMBASSY

E.O.11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB SF

SUBJECT: BLACKS BOYCOTT LOCAL BUS SERVICE AFTER FARE INCREASE

1. BLACK RESIDENTS OF JOHANNESBURG SUBURB OF KWA THEMA HAVE INSTITUTED BOYCOTT OF PUTCO BUS SERVICE TO INDUSTRIAL SUBURB OF SPRINGS FOLLOWING PUTCO ACTION INCREASING FARES FROM 10 TO 15 CENTS. BOYCOTT RESULTED IN SOME MINOR VIOLENCE ON MARCH 1, BUT WAS LARGELY PEACEFUL AND EFFECTIVE WITH BLACKS EITHER WALKING THE SIX KILOMETERS TO WORK OR HIRING TAXIS WHICH DID LAND OFFICE BUSINESS.

2. FARE INCREASE AND SUBSEQUENT BOYCOTT ON THIS RELATIVELY SMALL PART OF PUTCO SYSTEM NOT OF MAJOR IMPORTANCE IN ITSELF, BUT PUTCO HAS A GENERAL INCREASE IN THE WORKS WHICH WOULD AFFECT ALL RESIDENTS OF SOWETO WHICH MAY WELL LEAD TO MUCH LARGER PROTEST, ESPECIALLY SINCE BLACK SPOKESMEN STATE THAT RESIDENTS OF SOWETO WERE NOT RPT NOT CONSULTED.

3. IN RELATED DEVELOPMENT, TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION OF SOUTH AFRICA (TUCSA) HAS JUST PUBLISHED RESULTS OF SURVEY IT UNDERTOOK TO ESTABLISH TOTAL AMOUNT SPENT BY BLACKS ON TRANSPORTATION TO AND FROM WORK. TUCSA FIGURES WHICH INDICATE UNCLASSIFIED

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THAT BLACK WAGE-EARNERS SPEND R12 PER MONTH ON TRANSPORTATION

(THIS DOES NOT RPT NOT INCLUDE MONEY SPENT BY WIVES AND CHILDREN)
ARE SUBSTANTIALLY HIGHER THAN PREVIOUS STUDIES ON SUBJECT
INDICATE.

4. PROPOSED FARE INCREASE IS RELATIVELY MODEST (TWO TO THREE
CENTS), BUT IT AFFECTS PARTICULARLY THOSE AT BOTTOM OF ECONOMIC
LADDER AND COMES AT A TIME OF RISING PRICES FOR MANY OTHER
COMMODITIES.

5. HOW THE GOVERNMENT WILL REACT TO BOYCOTTS IS PROBABLY
ILLUSTRATED BY THE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT AN EAST LONDON BUS
COMPANY IS TO BE COMPENSATED R150,000 FOR LOSSES AND SALARIES
DURING A BOYCOTT OF ITS SERVICES.

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